

# Estrangement and Belongedness in the Ultimate Sacrifice of God

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“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name...”  
(John 1:10-12)

The sense of belonging is an amazing epistemic quality among humans. The animal world is not without it: the lioness with her cubs, the elephant with her calves, and the eagle with her eaglets portray a picture of attachment that are the subject of many a story, movie, and a documentary novel. But, in humans the sense is qualitatively different. It is epistemic and existential. Martin Buber talked of its occurrence in two worlds of relationships: the I-It (related to the world of utility) and the I-Thou (related to the world of relational bonds). Where the sense of I-Thou doesn't exist, dehumanization occurs. Estrangement is a horrific aftermath of a loss of the Thou in the I-Thou world of epistemic and existential sensibility. Added to that, this is also the world where values (both aesthetic and moral) are a reality beyond any materialistic, scientific recognition. The sense is spiritual. The world is spiritual. Therefore, loneliness, boredom, emptiness, and rootlessness are not causes but symptoms of disturbance in the world of I-Thou. Their persistence will result in the human person seeking escapism in some alternate I-It world (sensations (drugs, sex, alcohol, etc) or anti-sensation (sleep, suicide).

Volumes can be written on this topic. But, let's focus on the verse before us. When John talks about the Word (God the Son) being in the world, the word “world” comprehends both the physical and the human. The human, in fact, is responsible for how the world treats God. The human is the world. Now, it was through the Son that the world was brought into existence – the world that belongs to humans, since it was given to them. But, humanity fell into the corruption of sin and the bondage of death (and with it the entire creation was made subject to bondage).

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (Rom.5:12)

For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope (Rom 8:20)

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.  
(Rom 8:22)

Death, in essence, was not merely physical. It was spiritual, epistemic, existential, aesthetic, and ethical. Sin brought estrangement from God (the ultimate Thou in the relational set). Yet, the umbilical cord was not snapped, or else man would have sunk into diabolical hellishness. We see strands of love and belongedness and a deep quest for God in the hearts of men. Distortions only occur where the I-Thou world has been fully erased. The Scripture records that God didn't leave humans alone; His spirit kept striving with them, and through prophets and holy men of God in every tribe, He communicated to them an anticipation of liberation that was soon to come:

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.  
(Rom 8:19)

Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (Rom.8:21)

The reason why the Son of God came to the world was because the world was made through Him – it ultimately belonged to Him. It was lost; yet, it was His. He was willing to leave alone the 99 in order to seek this one that was lost. But the world did not recognize Him, His own didn't receive Him. There are sharp, acute, and yet distinct pictures here. The pictures are sharper in prose than any poetry can portray.

The world is not the world as a whole and yet it is the world as a whole. Not everybody failed to recognize Him, and not everybody rejected Him; and, yet in the moment of the Sacrifice, that was what happened. The world as a whole was represented by the leaders (both religious and political) who put to death the Son of God. The depth of estrangement and contortion was manifest in the kind of death administered: the death of the Cross. It was the world that failed to recognize Him – the world that belonged to Him. Yet, the real story is not that the world rejected Him; the real story is that He was willing to let the world reject Him. Divine self-emptying, divine servanthood, and divine crucifixion are powerful themes that shock the philosophy of religion. Nietzsche called the greatest of all sins to be the murder of God (deicide). There was nothing more sinful than that. On the reverse, the greatest of all righteousness fulfilled was in the self-giving of the Son of God. This self-giving brought an end to the history of hostility between man and God. It cancelled all debts. Man had committed the greatest of all crimes, and God had allowed it to be done to Him in the

ultimate divine sacrifice. The Cross was where Justice and Love met vis-à-vis. It was where man affirmed his estrangement and God affirmed His belongedness. It was where God accepted man as he was. The one act of righteousness by the Son of God nullified forever the writ of accusation against all humanity. The veil was torn away; the entrance is paved, now the ball is in our court. He has accepted us. Do we receive Him or choose to remain estranged?

Therefore, “as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”